

James Madison to George Washington, December 14, 1787. Transcription: The Writings of James Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900-1910.

TO GEORGE WASHINGTON. MAD. MSS.

New York, Decr. 14, 1787.

Dear Sir, —Along with this are inclosed a few copies of the latest Gazettes containing the additional papers in favor of the federal Constitution.

I find by letters from Richmond that the proceedings of the Assembly, are as usual, rapidly degenerating with the progress of the session¹ ; and particularly that the force opposed to the Act of the Convention has gained the ascendance. There is still nevertheless a hope left that different characters and a different spirit may prevail in their successors who are to make the final decision. In one point of view the present Assembly may perhaps be regarded as pleading most powerfully the cause of the new government, for it is impossible for stronger proofs to be found than in their conduct, of the necessity of some such anchor against the fluctuations which threaten to shipwreck our liberty.

¹ Archibald Stuart wrote from Richmond Dec. 2, 1787: "A Resolution was brought forward the day before yesterday for paying the members to Convention in June their Wages & securing to them Certain privileges &c. seconded by P. H. & Mason which after making Provision for ye purposes aforesaid goes farther & sais that should ye convention think proper to propose Amendments to ye Constitution this state will make provision for carrying the same into effect & that Money shall be advanced for ye support of Deputies to the Neighbouring States &c.—This many of us opposed as improper & proposed that

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the same provision should be made in General terms which should not discover the sense of the house on ye Subject but after a Long Debate the point was carried against us by a Majority of sixteen—In the Course of ye Debate P. Hy. Observed that if this Idea was not held forth our southern neighbours might be driven to despair seeing no door open to safety should they disapprove the new Constitution—Mason on the subject was less candid than ever I knew him to be—from the above mentioned Vote there appears to be a Majority vs ye [new] Govt. as it now Stands & I fear since they have discovered their Strength they will adopt other measures tending to its prejudice from this circumstance I am happy to find most of ye States will have decided on ye question before Virginia for I now have my doubts whether She would afford them as usual a good Example.”

Henry Lee wrote Dec. 7, 1787, from Stratford: “It is with real grief I inform you that by a late vote of the Assembly of Virga. on a collateral question, they have manifested hostility to the new constitution—Henry whose art is equal to his talents for declamation, conducted this business & gained a majority on the vote of sixteen.

“We are told by gentlemen from Richmond, that the whole district South of the James river are in the opposition—In this corner the people are warmly attached to the new system, but we are small in size, being only four or five countys.

“I saw Genl. Washington on my return, he continues firm as a rock, the Pages are all zealous abettors of the constitution so is R. Wormely & F. Lightfoot Lee—Both of these gentlemen are candidates for the convention—the last is an important acquisition & breaks the influence of the Stratford Lees—It becomes you to return in time to secure your election. If possible let me see you—I have offered myself for Westmoreland, but such is the number who contend for this distinction, it is not probable that I may succeed. God bless you.”

From Rose Hill, Dec. 16, Lawrence Taliaferro wrote:

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"I am sorry to inform you that the Federal system is deeply [?] slandered by some very able men in this State tho we have some very good & able men that are Friends of that & their Country & wish it to be adopted as speedily as Posable. . . . It is the sincere Wish & desire of myself & a Great many others that you will also represent the People of this County in the Spring Convention & we Earnestly beg that you will be here some time before the election . . . I dare say you will be greatly suppd. to hear that it is report'd that you are oposd. to the Sistem & I was told the other day that you were actually writing a peice against it."— *Mad. MSS.*

I am dear Sir with the most sincere & perfect esteem. Your affecte. & obedt humble servant.